

## Faith and Inspiration

# Justice for All



By Vincent V. Marshburn -

In an ideal and ordered society, cultivating a sense of security and trust typically depends in part on an expectation of consequence for transgressions, with an intention to curtail questionable behavior, or at least encourage restraint.

The urge and impulse towards some sense of moral suitability and satisfaction leads to what we would deem a notion of justice.

There is an aspect of justice which asserts that, in the interest of ensuring fair and reasonable treatment for all, individuals ought to be subject to a principle of reciprocity — that is, receiving what they "deserve."

Throughout the Bible we are informed of God's interest in justice, his manner of delivering it, and the relationship between his justice, his righteousness, and even his wrath (Leviticus 19:15, Psalm 33:5, Proverbs 18:5, Isaiah 1:17, Amos 5:24, Micah 6:8, Romans 3:26, Colossians 3:25, etc.).

An impartial and equitable application of law often demands some form of punitive or reparatory action.

However, we are instructed in Scripture to avoid contorting any presumed premise of justice into a rationale for revenge.

Many of us are familiar with the passages in Scripture that proscribe personal acts of retribution (Leviticus 19:18, Deuteronomy 32:35, Romans 12:19).

Such verses illustrate the distinction between individual compulsion for retaliation and God's prerogative on vengeance.

Most sober-minded believers understand that such counsel does not dismiss the very real need to uphold and execute justice in a civilized society.

Despite what some might conclude, government can have a positive role in the welfare of human beings.

Anarchy is generally not a productive or practical means of

fostering effective human growth and development.

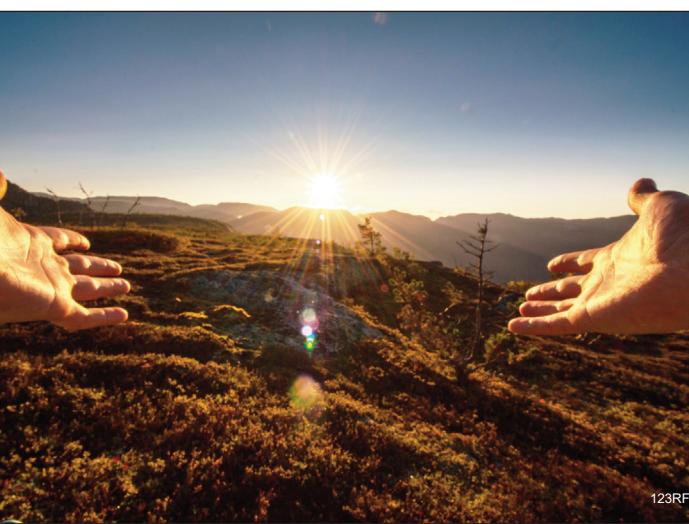
Human government, flawed as it is in nearly every respect, is but one of God's instruments for impeding evil.

On the one hand, political corruption and tyranny are undeniable realities. Historically, there have been, and continue to be, obvious instances of governments that overstep their mandate to maintain order and dispense real justice.

Nonetheless, in contrast to any opinion that all implementations of law enforcement and military services merely represent outlets of violence and ruthlessness, the Bible describes the proper role of civil authority and defense and the relationship with believers.

While those who exhibit righteousness need not fear those in positions of authority, the government does bear responsibility in addressing threats to the well-being of its citizens.

As described in Romans 13:4: "But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it (government) does not bear the sword for



nothing; for it is a servant of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil." This principle is echoed in 1 Peter 2:13-14.

With that said, on an individual level, we are called to contemplate redemption rather than reprisal. Our response to injustice can reveal as much about ourselves as the transgressors.

In the television series "Star Trek: Deep Space 9," Kira Nerys is a member of the deeply spiritual and highly resilient species, the Bajorans.

Within recent history, the planet Bajor had been forcibly occupied by the officious and domineering species, the Cardassians.

During this occupation, the population of Bajor had been oppressed and subjected to military control. Eventually, after frequent uprisings and pressures from other galactic governments, the

Cardassians withdrew from Bajor.

In one episode, Kira encounters an individual who initially claims his name is Aamin Marritza and that he served as a filing clerk at a particular forced labor camp operated by the Cardassians during the occupation.

At this camp, many Bajorans endured brutal and hostile conditions which often resulted in maltreatment and execution.

As a member of a militant Bajoran resistance movement, Kira herself helped liberate this labor camp and is familiar with its dark history and the equally dark reputation of its overseer, a man named Darhe'el who exhibited genocidal ambitions.

Marritza further insists that he was not directly involved in any reported atrocities.

Kira, like many Bajorans, harbors a deep-seated contempt towards just about any Cardassian and is highly suspicious of the man's claims of innocence or ignorance.

Soon, apparent evidence surfaces that Marritza may be the despised Darhe'el

having died some years earlier.

Kira, still angry but confused, confronts Marritza about why he would willingly accept the accusation. He breaks down, and she even experiences a twinge of sympathy for the former lowly filing clerk.

**KIRA:** You didn't commit those crimes, and you couldn't stop them. You were only one man.

**MARRITZA:** No, don't you see? I have to be punished. We all have to be punished. Major, you have to go out and tell them I'm Gul Darhe'el. It's the only way.

**KIRA:** Why are you doing this?

**MARRITZA:** For Cardassia. Cardassia will only survive if it stands in front of Bajor and admits the truth. My trial will force Cardassia to acknowledge its guilt.

And we're guilty, all of us. My death is necessary.

**KIRA:** What you're asking for is another murder. Enough good people have already died. I won't help kill another.

Kira comes to realize that her characteristic instinct for revenge against Cardassians appears moot in the face of one man's helplessness and inability to oppose or alter an overwhelming regime of arrogance, persecution, and cruelty.

She comes to perceive an inkling that there may be more to be pursued than revenge, and perhaps even more than justice.

Many of us can understand the tension between justice and revenge. As believers, we further understand that God's holiness and righteousness demand justice and that Jesus came to fulfill the justice required by the Law.

He paid the penalty in blood to ensure that all who accept the redemption through his sacrifice can receive not what they deserve, but rather what God desires to bestow: pardon from the price of sin.

Through his grace, we find that justice has been executed against Jesus on our behalf, and thus we can claim our defense against the strict stipulations of justice.

As the Bible states, we are "justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the Law; since by works of the Law no flesh will be justified." (Galatians 2:16) This is the good news of God's "justice for all."

# Commissioner Manny Diaz, Jr. Announces January Books of the Month



## FLDOE -

Florida Commissioner of Education Manny Diaz, Jr. announced January's chosen books for the Commissioner's Book of the Month, a monthly reading challenge to promote literacy and reading engagement in preK-12 schools.

Each month, Commissioner Diaz highlights five recommended books—one selected per grade range.

"What better way to begin another great year than to spark imagination and interest in reading with these outstanding books," said Commissioner of Education Manny Diaz, Jr.

"Books enrich the lives of students and pave the way for academic success. With Florida's annual Celebrate Literacy

Week around the corner, let's celebrate the power of reading by encouraging these great selections."

The Commissioner's recommendations for January 2024 are:

- PreK – Moon: A Peek-Through Board Book by Britta Teckentrup
- K-2 – My Magical Foods by Becky Cummings
- 3-5 – Oh, the Places You'll Go! by Dr. Seuss
- 6-8 – Brian's Winter by Gary Paulsen
- 9-12 – Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen

On the FDOE website, you can find the Commissioner's Book of the Month selections.

For more information about the Florida Department of Education, visit [www.fl DOE.org](http://www.fl DOE.org).

## SHARED



Community newspapers average 2.48 readers per copy.

## ENDURING



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Print deadline is Wednesday at noon.

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305-454-4944

# Keep Warm During Cold Weather Safely

## MDFR -

As a cold front pushes through South Florida, Miami-Dade County will be experiencing below average temperatures.

If you require assistance with homeless sheltering, please contact the Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust Helpline at 1 (877) 994-HELP (4357) or (305) 375-CARE (2273).

The Miami-Dade Department of Emergency Management (DEM) and Miami-Dade Fire Rescue (MDFR) urge residents to take precautions to stay healthy and safe during

cold weather.

You can also follow DEM on Twitter at @MiamiDadeEM and like us on Facebook at facebook.com/MiamiDadeCountyEM for forecast information.

### Winter safety tips:

- Stay indoors as much as possible to keep healthy, safe, and warm. Make sure to check on friends, family members, and neighbors who are especially at risk from cold weather hazards: young children, older adults, and the chronically ill.
- For outside activities,
- Eat well-balanced meals to stay warmer. Avoid drinking alcoholic beverages—they cause your body to lose heat more rapidly. Instead, drink warm beverages such as hot chocolate or hot tea to help maintain your body temperature. If you have any dietary restrictions, consult your doctor.
- Bring pets out of the cold weather and provide them warm shelter.
- Heat your home safely.

dress in multiple layers of loose-fitting clothing. Don't forget to wear a hat, scarf and mittens, or other winter gear.

- Eat well-balanced meals to stay warmer. Avoid drinking alcoholic beverages—they cause your body to lose heat more rapidly. Instead, drink warm beverages such as hot chocolate or hot tea to help maintain your body temperature. If you have any dietary restrictions, consult your doctor.
- Bring pets out of the cold weather and provide them warm shelter.
- Heat your home safely.

If you plan to use a fireplace or space heater, be extremely careful. Make sure each appliance is properly adjusted and you have followed the manufacturer's instructions and local building codes for use.

- Prevent carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning by never using generators, charcoal grills or gas grills indoors and by installing a CO detector to alert you of the presence of the deadly, odorless, colorless gas.
- Staying informed during an imminent threat

or emergency is critical in helping to make the right decision for you and your family. Receiving alerts will provide you with guidance in making informed decisions.

Sign up for free emergency alerts and you'll be notified about weather emergencies such as tornados, tropical storms or hurricane warnings issued by the National Weather Service or any other emergency that may require public protective actions.

The Miami-Dade County Department of Emergency Management will continue to monitor weather forecasts and provide additional notifications as conditions warrant.

For forecast information specific to your area, please visit <http://www.weather.gov/mfl>.

It is the policy of Miami-Dade County to comply with requirements of the ADA.